



ADMINISTRATION ON
INTELLECTUAL AND
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES



Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
<http://acf.hhs.gov/programs/aidd>

Fact Sheet: AIDD's Employment First Initiatives

For many individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), securing and maintaining employment is a key part of achieving independence and living a productive life in the community. These individuals, however, often face barriers when trying to access meaningful and integrated employment, and many employers are unaware of their capabilities. To address these challenges, AIDD funds two employment initiatives that help improve employment outcomes for individuals with I/DD.

Funded under AIDD's Projects of National Significance, these initiatives are part of AIDD's priority to promote Employment First for individuals with I/DD, which refers to the idea that community-based, integrated employment is the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities.

Partnerships in Employment Systems Change

Under this initiative, AIDD is enhancing collaboration across state systems to improve employment outcomes for individuals with I/DD, with a focus on youth and young adults. Grantees have established partnerships to improve state service systems by encouraging states to adopt an Employment First approach for individuals with I/DD.

AIDD awarded funding to six grantees in 2011 and provided funding to two additional entities in 2012. In addition, in 2011 AIDD awarded funding to the The Lewin Group, a health care and human services consulting firm, to evaluate these projects and inform AIDD and its partners how to best work to support employment systems change.

AIDD provides funding for:

- *Eight projects under Partnerships in Employment Systems Change*
- *One project to evaluate Partnerships in Employment Systems Change*
- *One project under Community of Practice for Supporting Competitive Integrated Employment*

Community of Practice for Supporting Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

In 2012 AIDD awarded funding to the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston to establish a community of practice comprising 5 to 10 states in the first year, with plans to expand as appropriate. A community of practice is a group of people who share the same interest and collaborate consistently to share ideas and discuss solutions to challenges.

The goal of the project is to build capacity, reform delivery systems, and improve strategies related to competitive integrated employment. To meet these goals, ICI will create a panel that includes Employment First from the U.S. Department of Labor, the State Employment Leadership Network, and the Partnerships in Employment Systems Change projects.

Training and technical assistance will be conducted in partnership with AIDD's Developmental Disabilities Network, state vocational rehabilitation agencies, and other relevant state agencies.